

MEMORANDUM

DATE July 14, 2015
TO City of Morgan Hill City Council and Planning Commission
FROM PlaceWorks
SUBJECT New General Plan Policies

Meeting Objective: Approve, reject, or suggest revisions to proposed policy additions to the General Plan Update.

Last fall, the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) discussed policy options for the General Plan Update at GPAC Meeting #13, held on October 23, 2014, and at GPAC Meeting #14, held on November 20, 2014. These discussions focused on key unresolved policy issues that were based on the Vision Statement, Goals, Alternatives Analysis, and on feedback heard at GPAC meetings, Planning Commission/City Council study sessions, stakeholder interviews, and public workshops. The policy issues fall into the following categories:

- » Neighborhood Centers/Non-Traditional Uses in Shopping Centers
- » Residential Design Standards
- » Youth and Senior Services
- » Community Health
- » Community Gardens
- » Park Requirements
- » Transit for Seniors
- » Agricultural Preservation
- » Water Conservation

The GPAC discussion focused on different policy options presented for each of the topics identified above and resulted in discrete policy direction for each topic. PlaceWorks and BAE prepared draft policies based on GPAC direction as presented in the separate document attached to this memorandum for reference.

Neighborhood Centers/Non-Traditional Uses in Shopping Centers

NEW POLICIES AND ACTIONS BASED ON GPAC INPUT

New Policy: Allow neighborhood centers within future residential neighborhoods. Neighborhood centers are envisioned as nodes or focal points that offer neighborhood-serving services and amenities within a reasonable walking distance from adjoining residential areas. These centers should be designed to increase the accessibility of goods and services within existing residential neighborhoods, particularly for the benefit of senior citizens and those with limited mobility, and to offer opportunities for socialization.

New Policy: Provide for safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle connections as well as transit access to support existing neighborhood centers, including shopping centers, medical offices, sports fields, and the Centennial Recreation Center.

New Policy: Encourage neighborhood-serving retail and service uses that promote community health, social interaction within neighborhood centers, such as small grocery stores, cafés, or recreational uses.

New Policy: Require future neighborhood centers to meet the following requirements:

- The design of neighborhood center should provide a sense of place, promote casual interaction, and enhance overall well-being.
- The design of a neighborhood center should complement the residential character of its immediate surroundings, including site design, access, building style, building materials, signage, lighting, and landscaping.

New Policy: Encourage the evolution of existing shopping centers into pedestrian-oriented neighborhood centers by supporting integration of uses that provide necessary or useful services or amenities that will benefit the surrounding neighborhood as a whole. Such uses may include but shall not be limited to:

- Health services and fitness facilities
- Childcare

- Housing, including affordable and senior housing
- Religious facilities
- Education/training facilities
- Parks/community facilities/public gathering places

New Policy: Support private sector actions and projects that facilitate revitalization of existing shopping centers and, when appropriate, reuse.

New Policy: Ensure that shopping center revitalization and reuse plans incorporate appropriate public improvements; pedestrian and bike amenities; transit facilities; connections to adjacent development; and other design features that will enhance their function as community activity centers.

New Policy: Consider and, if appropriate, offer a range of financial and non-financial incentives and assistance to encourage revitalization and reuse of underperforming shopping centers, including, but not limited to:

- Target public investments, including enhanced transit service where possible, to underperforming shopping centers that are undergoing revitalization and reuse.
- Partner with property owners to offer technical assistance and proactively engage neighbors and other stakeholders in developing reuse concepts.
- Offer property owners flexibility in designing reuse projects – e.g., give property owners the option to request a “planned development” or “special planning area” designation that would allow them to creatively and efficiently plan new development while working within site constraints.
- Offer permit streamlining/priority processing to facilitate shopping center revitalization and reuse projects.
- When justified, offer incentives in the form of impact fee credits or reductions and/or public financing assistance to enhance the feasibility of commercial center revitalization and reuse projects.

New Action: Evaluate the performance of each shopping center in Morgan Hill and identify low performing shopping centers to target for support and revitalization.

New Action: Study and, if appropriate, implement changes to land use regulations such as:

- Reducing parking standards for mixed-use shopping center reuse projects, recognizing the potential for shared use of parking and reduced auto dependency if located near transit and/or accessible via walking or cycling.
- Expanding the range of by-right uses in targeted retail centers.
- Providing clear design and land use guidelines and performance criteria for shopping center reuse projects.

New Action: If retail uses are to remain as part of a shopping center revitalization or reuse project, encourage site designs that optimize retail visibility and access and ensure that new uses do not conflict with remaining retail functions.

New Action: Work proactively to assist tenants who will be dislocated by revitalization or reuse projects to find replacement business locations within the City.

New Action: Update the City's Zoning Ordinance to provide adequate flexibility for the development of new commercial services within existing commercial and/or residential districts.

Residential Design Standards

New Policy: Review all new residential developments for consistency with the guidelines in the City's Architectural Review Handbook through the design review process.

New Policy: Require all new residential development to feature high quality design that enhances the visual character of Morgan Hill.

New Policy: Ensure that new residential development is sensitive to the character of adjacent structures and the immediate neighborhood.

New Policy: Ensure that new residential development is designed to maximize features to promote pedestrian and bicycle activity.

New Action: Update the Architectural Review Handbook as needed to reflect newly emerging design best practices.

Delete Completed Action CD 8.2: ~~Develop, adopt and enforce design standards for residential neighborhoods, providing for special design themes, signage, and roadways and sidewalk materials, and other methods of strengthening neighborhood identity.~~

Youth and Senior Services

- New Goal: A built environment and community services that serve the needs of youth and seniors, allowing residents to age in place.
- New Policy: Ensure there are sufficient City programs to address the growing need for youth and senior.
- New Policy: Encourage developers to provide amenities that support the needs of youth and seniors.
- New Policy: Value the role of youth and seniors by including representatives on boards and commissions and providing youth and seniors with volunteer opportunities.
- New Policy: Dedicate City staff and financial resources to promote the 41 Developmental Assets identified as crucial to supporting healthy youth development.
- New Policy: Encourage Universal Design, a design concept that encourages accessibility for people of all ages, in new construction and major remodels.
- New Action: Study the utilization of existing youth and senior services and explore ways to expand and strengthen these services.

Community Health

- New Goal: Access for all residents to quality health care facilities that provide a wide range of services.
- New Policy: Work with Santa Clara County Public Health and local providers to enhance access to and information about mental health services.
- New Policy: Work with transit providers to establish transit stops at or within a quarter mile of medical facilities.
- New Action: Maintain zoning designations that encourage medical facilities and providers to locate in the community.

New Action: Work with Gavilan Community College, Work2Future, and Santa Clara County Public Health to identify and address any gaps in education and training needed to provide adequate health care practitioners in Morgan Hill.

Community Gardens

New Policy: Allow community gardens to count toward open space requirements for new development projects.

New Policy: Partner with schools to increase community residents' access to school gardens and student access to community gardens.

New Policy: Encourage community groups to develop community gardens by providing City staff expertise and waivers for permit and hookup fees.

New Policy: Encourage sources of fresh food, including grocery stores, farmers markets, and community gardens, and prioritize underserved areas for new sources of healthy food.

New Policy: Lower the assessed value on plots of three acres or less if the owners pledge to dedicate them to growing food for at least five years, in accordance with Assembly Bill 551 (Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones Act).

New Action: Identify and inventory potential community garden and urban farm sites on publicly-owned sites such as existing parks, public easements, vacant sites, rights-of-way, and schoolyards, and develop a program to establish permanent or temporary community gardens in appropriate locations.

New Action: Establish a process through which a neighborhood can propose and adopt a site as a community garden.

New Action: Amend the Zoning Code to allow community gardens and small scale urban agriculture in any appropriate zoning designation.

Park Requirements

New Policy: Encourage new development to permit public access to private open space.

Revised Action: Establish a consistent and reliable funding source for long-term park operations and maintenance. Consider initiating a ballot measure to establish

a citywide assessment district, utilizing the Residential Development Control System and other mechanisms for this purpose. [existing Action CD-18.14]

New Policy: Require multi-family residential developments to include common open space suitable for group gatherings. Common open space shall be funded and maintained by Homeowners Associations or the property owner.

New Policy Consider adoption of a Citywide Parkland Dedication Ordinance to achieve more development of public park space.

Transit for Seniors

Revised Policy: Strive to ensure the safety of the transportation system for all modes, including motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users, and for all segments of the community, including youth, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens. Implement strategies to ensure safe and appropriate operation of all components of the transportation system for all users, such as programs to lower crash rates and reduce the number of transportation-related injuries in the City through education, enforcement, engineering strategies, physical improvements, and operational systems. Prioritize strategies that improve safety for students, pedestrians, and bicyclists. [existing Policy CIR-1e]

Revised Policy: Promote improved local transit service, including shuttle service through the downtown; to major shopping, health care, recreation, and employment centers, and to senior housing developments. [existing Policy CIR-6e]

New Policy: Conduct a study, or participate in a regional study, of the most cost-effective means to expand transportation opportunities for senior citizens. Options to explore may include funding discounts for taxi fares, coordinating transit systems to be shared by multiple senior housing developments, and supporting a volunteer program to expand the supply of volunteer drivers. The study should consider the number of seniors served, cost, funding sources, liability, and other issues.

High Speed Rail

New Goal: Well-planned High Speed Rail service that minimizes negative local impacts.

New Policy: Remain actively engaged in planning efforts for High Speed Rail service to minimize local impacts and ensure that design is consistent with local plans and policies.

Agricultural Preservation

Revised Policy: Support agricultural activity by encouraging agriculture-related industry, commercial uses, and community events within the urban area, and expanding opportunities for small-scale agriculture. [Policy OS-3b]

Revised Policy: Continue to support the long-term maintenance of agricultural land uses and agriculture, including vineyards and wineries, as an economic enterprise in Morgan Hill, since it contributes to the local economy, helps to delineate urban boundaries, and is a productive use for land which is not immediately planned for urban development. (SCJAP 14.00) [Policy OS-3g]

Revised Policy: Take positive action to encourage agriculture by supporting local, county, and State policies favorable to agriculture. (SCJAP 14.01) [Policy OS-3h]

Revised Policy: In the County, support continuation of the A-20 and A-40 minimum lot size designations in the agricultural area to prevent conversion to urban uses, but work with the County to consider whether reduced minimum lot sizes should be allowed to support small-scale agricultural activities. (SCJAP 14.05) [Policy OS-3m]

Revised Action: Consider expanding the Agricultural Lands Preservation Program to use a variety of techniques to protect agricultural land and compensate landowners who choose to preserve agricultural land, including land use regulation, urban development policy, conservation easements (with matching grant funds from appropriate agencies, where possible), and transfer or purchase of development rights, agricultural mitigation fees, increased transfer fees, Measure C funds, or Homeowners Association fees from new development. [Action OS-3.1]

Revised Action: In order to separate agricultural from urban activities, and to minimize land use conflicts, amend the Zoning Code to require that a buffer be established on property proposed for residential development in order to protect adjoining land designated and used for agriculture from incompatible use conflicts. ~~establish buffers between viable agricultural areas and urban expansion areas,~~ Limiting activities in these buffer zones to uses which are compatible with both agricultural and urban activities. Specific uses should be defined through an open inter-governmental process. Prioritize protection of existing agriculture lands in the Sphere of Influence. (SCJAP 14.11) [existing Action OS-3.6]

New Action: Explore techniques to support small-scale agricultural operations, such as amending the Zoning Code to reduce minimum lot sizes for agricultural uses or allow a greater range of agricultural activities in residential and other urban areas.

New Action: Conduct a study to propose specific Zoning Code amendments to allow beekeeping in appropriate zones.

Water Conservation

New Action: Correct known deficiencies in the City's sewer, storm drain, and water systems and work toward environmentally sustainable systems.

New Action: Maintain the City's infrastructure to ensure that facilities are up to date and incorporate efficiency and conservation mechanisms.

New Action: Develop local ordinances that require new commercial and industrial development to use only low-water-use plants in landscaping and that increase the use of drought-tolerate landscaping in new residential development.

New Action: Create incentives for homeowners of older residential buildings to retrofit water fixtures to improve water efficiency and conservation. Explore ways to link homeowners with incentive programs offered by other agencies or organizations. Options for creating a City-sponsored retrofit program could include using Measure C funds or creating citywide fees for water usage. Work with utility providers and City departments to market the program owners who own older homes, are undertaking renovations, or are new owners.